



February 2021 Newsletter

President's Corner

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

AHEA's 2021 Conference will be our first ever virtual Conference hosted by the local organizing Committee at the University of Pécs. AHEA's Executive Committee wrestled with the options. We agreed that cancelling once again would not be in AHEA's best interest. So, the short of it is that we are planning our **AHEA Conference in 2021 on June 24-26**. Please save the dates!

Conference registration is free; however, you will need to supply your own coffee at coffee breaks and your own wine at cocktail hours. We are planning a terrific program.

We have contacted all authors whose abstracts were accepted at last year's conference to inquire about their willingness to present their abstract at this year's virtual conference. So far, we have heard from 41 authors, of whom 81% expressed willingness to present their abstracts virtually online at our Conference. We may have slots for a few additional abstracts. Please watch our website (AHEA.net) for the most current information.

The program and meeting registration information will be available in early March.



AHEA 2021's plenary speaker is distinguished scholar and educator, **Dr. András Ludányi**. His research has focused on interethnic and inter-nationality relations in East Central Europe and the United States, with particular attention on developments in Transylvania and Voivodina. He has published numerous scholarly articles and reviews in his research area. In recognition of his work at Ohio Northern University (ONU), he received the Wilfred E. Binkley Chair of History and Political Science and subsequently the Kernan Robson Chair in Politics. The Hungarian government recognized his achievements and awarded him the Köztársasági Érdemrend Kiskeresztje in 1992 and the Magyar Érdemrend Lovagkeresztje in 2019. He retired from ONU in 2008 and continues his active scholarship through the Nemzetpolitikai Kutató Intézet in Hungary.

Here's wishing you good health, much success in your scholarly pursuits. Please reach out if you have comments or suggestions on how AHEA might better support your career advancement.

With best wishes,

Klara Papp, PhD
President, AHEA
klarapapp@gmail.com

Member Spotlight

AHEA is a scholarly organization connecting a diverse set of educators, researchers, professionals, independent scholars and academics who come from many walks of life. Each month we highlight the academic and professional career of a different AHEA member.



This month's featured member is **Réka Pigniczky**.

Réka is a documentary filmmaker and visual journalist. Alongside Andrea Lauer, she is the co-creator of the [Memory Project](#), a monumental work of oral history, which documents the lives of over 130 Hungarian émigrés from the post-1945 and post-1956 eras. Many of the interviewees are AHEA members.

We asked Réka to talk about her work and her connections with AHEA, and her responses were both generous and illuminating. You can sample her oeuvre at www.56films.hu.

Please tell us a little bit about your career arc, how you came to know Réka/Andrea, and how you came to work on the Memory Project.

After graduating from UCSD and having studied political science with an emphasis on East-Central Europe, I headed straight for Hungary to jump on the political transition bandwagon, where all the lights were green! The early 1990's was an exciting time to be in Hungary with a fresh political science degree and a good grasp of the language and culture (thanks to my parents who raised me in the Hungarian-American "incubator.") I spent the first few years working with one of the new parties in parliament (the Free Democrats) as well as working with a number of NGOs that had sprung up in 1989. It was a fast-paced, eye-opening and formative part of my personal and professional life. While in Budapest, I completed my MA in Political Science at the CEU and headed to New York to complete a Master of International Affairs at Columbia University. At some point, I realized that covering politics was more exciting than representing it, and I began my career in 1998 as a television journalist working for the Associated Press as a video journalist in New York. I covered international news in and around New York, including the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center. I returned to Budapest from 2002 to 2012, during which I still worked for the AP but also became a documentary filmmaker, making my first film about my father's role in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. After my first film, my documentary work began to eclipse my work as a video journalist as I found my true calling more in the former. In 2015, based on some of my earlier documentary work, I co-Founded the Memory Project with Andrea, with whom I had worked on a number of projects about 1956.

How did you find out about AHEA, and what led you to join?

I found out about AHEA through my mother, Katalin Voros, who is the AHEA Webmaster and member of the Advisory Board. Since I can remember, she has put countless volunteer hours into AHEA programs and publications and her enthusiasm was contagious. The conferences that I've been to have been both interesting and enjoyable.

What impact has your involvement with AHEA made on your career and/or your work?

AHEA has been a great way to launch the Memory Project (and some of my previous films) into the Hungarian-American academic environment where we have received great support.

Tell us, please, about your current project.

2021 marks the 65th anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and so the Memory Project is now in full swing. We received a grant from the National Film Institute in Hungary to work on a full-length film using the 145 interviews collected by the archive in the past few years. We also received funding from the US Embassy in Budapest and the Bethlen Gábor fund to record more interviews and to create a 10-minute compilation video that diaspora communities can screen during their commemorations this Fall. It's been challenging to do interviews during the COVID-19 pandemic, but we've managed to do some in-person interviews in Budapest during the hiatus in lock-down restrictions as well as using Zoom - including an interview with Annette Lantos, a Hungarian Holocaust survivor and widow of CA Congressman Tom Lantos. I'm also working on a collaboration between the Memory Project and the Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design (MOME) where we are creating a video installation using Memory Project interviews as well as a number of other new projects -- many of which will be online and global in nature -- that the students are creating based on the archive and what 1956 means to them. In the U.S. (I am currently based in Budapest again), Andrea is fast at work on setting up new interviews for us to do when restrictions are lifted and working on MP materials that can be used at commemorative events there. So we are truly busy as well as grateful for all the support we are receiving for our work on the Memory Project. We are really in the last hour of collecting interviews with DPs and 1956ers.

Bylaws Vote Coming Soon

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Renew Your Membership Now!

We are pleased to announce that our Bylaws have been rewritten to comply with the laws of the state in which we are incorporated (Maryland). We will post the new Bylaws on our website and invite members to vote on its acceptance by electronic ballot in March. All dues paying members in 2020 and 2021 will have the right to vote. Voting members will receive a personalized link by email to access their ballot. The election will be held over a 14-day period and all voting members are urged to exercise their right to vote.

You can [join or renew your membership](#) to participate in this important governance issue.

Don't Let Your Membership Benefits Stop!

Renew your 2021 membership to ensure uninterrupted membership today to ensure access to an expanded network of scholars and academics working in multidisciplinary fields of Hungarian Studies.

AHEA's membership dues enable you to access "Members Only" section of the website, participate in the governance of AHEA through your vote on our newly revised Bylaws as well as officers and board members.

We are pleased to announce membership discounts as well as the option of a new **lifetime membership**. Visit <https://ahea.net/members/membership-information>.

Only members in good standing can vote in leadership elections. Please remember to renew yours! [Click here](#) to access our PayPal link, or to get information on paying by check or bank transfer.

Where Your Membership Dollar Goes



71% of your membership dues directly fund AHEA's mission of the **teaching and dissemination of Hungarian culture** through the annual conference and scholarship support programs. The other 29% helps keep our organization running.